

MUNICIPALITY OF MONROEVILLE

ZONING HEARING BOARD

MARCH 5, 2025

MINUTES

The meeting was called to order at 7:35 p.m. by Chairman Michael Gaydos.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE AND MOMENT OF SILENCE

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited and a moment of silence was observed.

ROLL CALL

The Recording Secretary, Sharon McIndoe, called roll and following were present: Michael Gaydos, Larry D'Agostino, Heather Wilkins, Robert Hutchison, Kevin Whitfield (via zoom), Chelsea Dice and Paul Whealdon.

REORGANIZATION

Ms. Dice inquired whether there were any nominations for chairperson. Mr. D'Agostino nominated Mr. Michael Gaydos as Chairman. Whereupon, Mrs. Wilkins duly made a motion to approve the nomination of Mr. Gaydos as Chairman and Mr. D'Agostino seconded it. Upon voice vote, the motion carried unanimously.

Further, Mr. Gaydos nominated Mr. Larry D'Agostino as Vice Chairman. Whereupon, Mr. Gaydos duly made a motion to approve the nomination of Mr. D'Agostino as Vice Chairman and Mr. Hutchison seconded it. Upon a voice vote, the motion carried unanimously.

Further, Mr. Hutchison nominated Mrs. Heather Wilkins as Secretary. Whereupon, Mr. Hutchison duly made a motion to approve Mrs. Heather Wilkins as Secretary and Mr. D'Agostino seconded it. Upon a voice vote, the motion carried unanimously.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

There being no corrections, additions or deletions to the minutes of the Regular Meeting of December 4, 2024, a motion was duly made by Mr. D'Agostino to approve them, as submitted, and Mrs. Wilkins seconded it. Upon a voice vote, the motion carried unanimously.

NEW BUSINESS

25-1-A

PYRAMID HEALTHCARE, INCORPORATED

The applicant is requesting a variance from Article IX, Off-Street Parking and Loading, Section 904, Minimum Parking Requirements, of the Monroeville Zoning Ordinance No. 2779 to reduce the number of required parking spaces from 196 to 64. The property is located at 279 Center Road, Tax Parcel 743-D-303 in the BLVD, Boulevard Zoning District.

Mr. Jeff Ries, Attorney, came forward representing the applicant along with Mr. John Wolf, Founder and Chairman of Pyramid and Mr. Jeff Davis Construction Engineer. Mr. Ries explained they are seeking a parking variance of 132 parking spaces based on the code requirement of 196 spaces in the BLVD District for a substance abuse treatment facility. He reported based on the structure and the existing lot development, the maximum number of spaces that can be developed is 64.

Mr. Wolf explained the purpose of Pyramid Healthcare Incorporated. He stated they are one of largest behavioral health providers in the United States and they have 82 treatment facilities in eight states with approximately 3,500 employees. He reported on any given day, they treat 12,000 patients in their system and they are the largest private behavioral health provider in the State of Pennsylvania with over 40 treatment facilities. He explained how they opened their first substance abuse treatment facility in Allegheny County in 2003 and have been continuously providing behavioral health services for 22 years in this county. He stated they currently have three treatment facilities. He reported they have a great relationship with the county and all the municipalities where they have facilities.

Mr. Wolf reported the previous occupant of the building was a nursing home and they are proposing to convert that building into a residential substance abuse treatment facility. He stated it would have separate units, one for detoxification which is a medical detoxification with 24-hour nursing care and the second is the in-patient rehabilitation units with one for men and one for women. He again indicated there is a 24-hour nursing care physician supervisor, daily therapy, counseling, education and intensive treatment. He stated it is a short length of stay and it could be several days to several weeks.

Mr. Wolf pointed out they are a taxpayer and their plan is to add roughly 84 jobs at this facility on any given day. He explained their way of doing business is different than other medical facilities. He reported they pick up 100 percent of the patients that come into treatment and take 100 percent of the patients home which is part of the service they deliver. He reported their clients are forbidden to park at the facility because it is too much of an enticement for a patient to leave treatment. He explained how visitors are never allowed in the facility and they do not allow family members to visit unless it is part of a very structured family therapy exception.

Mr. Ries inquired about the difference between a out-patient and in-patient facility. Mr. Wolf explained the out patients would come and go every day but their facility sends a van or car to pick up a patient on admission. He added most patients do not leave the facility until they are discharged so there is no traffic. He mentioned the parking and explained the facility is a private place and the clients do not want to see anyone or be seen. He stated there is very little activity outside of the staff members. Mr. Ries questioned the staff needs and whether that would be who is using the parking. Mr. Wolf explained it is for approximately 84 staff members. Mr. Ries inquired whether they will be able to accommodate the staff vehicles with the proposed parking and Mr. Wolf answered affirmatively.

Mr. Gaydos referred to the 84 jobs mentioned and pointed out it is a 365 days, 24-hour facility. He inquired whether the 84 jobs included all shift changes and suggested it would be for 20-25 cars there at a time depending on the shift. Mr. Wolf agreed and added there would be a few more during the day, fewer for second shift and very few the third shift. Mr. Ries stated most of the treatment is during the day-light time so when the residents are sleeping minimal staff is necessary and Mr. Wolf concurred.

Mr. Jeff Davis came forward to report he is the Executive Vice President of Engineering Construction and he designs and builds facilities. Mr. Ries requested a description of the building structure and the property at 279 Center Road. Mr. Davis reported the property is 49,000 square feet which is the average size they have for their program and he stated their programs are approximately 120 beds. He pointed out it is currently a two-story and the previous facility is closed and they will invest approximately \$1-1.2 million into the building for renovations. He added part of that is the current 42 parking spaces they will expand to 64 spaces. He stated the property is small relative to parking requirements and the requirements are much bigger than what Pyramid is used to. He reported they operate another similar facility at 306 Penn Avenue in Wilkinsburg and it has been there for 12-14 years. He suggested this would replace the beds that are there which is a 148-bed program and has 58 parking spaces and they are proposing 64 parking spaces at this location for 140 beds. He reported they prepared a two-day parking study in Wilkinsburg and Mr. Ries pointed out it was submitted with their material. Mr. Davis explained he designed the parking lot in Wilkinsburg and the study was done over a two-day period in January. He stated every parking spot of the 58 spaces is for the traffic in and out during the first and second shift. He pointed out during the peak activity time that the 52 spaces out of the maximum 58 parking spaces were used around 11 a.m. He reported the period between 9 a.m. and 1 p.m. is 48 to 52 and prior to that for the first shift at the 7 a.m. change it was 19 to 20 spaces and the rest of the evening in was 29 to 30 spaces out of 58.

Mr. Ries pointed out the Wilkinsburg Facility has a few more beds than this facility but inquired whether the number of employees would be similar. Mr. Davis agreed it would be similar and explained it is 148 beds in Wilkinsburg and 140 beds at the proposed facility. Mr. Ries asserted it is anticipated that the parking study is an accurate representation of what the Center Road property would bring and Mr. Davis agreed.

Mr. Ries inquired whether the structure occupies most of the parcel and Mr. Davis stated it occupies approximately 75 percent of the parcel. He added there are 42 parking spaces. Mr. Ries explained the structure is in the middle of the property then the impervious parking with the driveways in. He questioned whether there is any other area that could be used for parking and Mr. Davis answered negatively.

Mr. Gaydos inquired whether a drawing was available and Mr. Ries answered affirmatively. Mr. Gaydos inquired about the location of the building and the parking. Mr. Davis pointed out the building in the hatched in area, the center court yard area, and the ingress access coming in around the parking area and Center Road. He also pointed out the current 42 parking spaces and stated there are ten parking spaces in the front of the building with an entry. He reported they have a proposed parking plan to create parking and he pointed out the location. He stated half of it is towards the back of the building and a little more at the front and the entry. Mr. Ries inquired whether they propose to do any construction and Mr. Davis answered negatively. Mr. Ries asserted the current building is how it was previously used it and Mr. Davis added the renovations will be inside the building other than the parking lot.

Mr. Whitfield suggested their location in Wilkinsburg has 58 parking spaces but they are utilizing 52 and they expect the same number of employees at the Monroeville so the 64 parking spaces is more than adequate. He inquired how they concluded 64 would be enough and Mr. Davis explained he used as much spaces as possible and 64 is the maximum number they can put in the lot. Mr. Whitfield

asserted there is no room to expand beyond the 64 spaces but he did not feel it would be necessary. Mr. Davis agreed and explained they felt 64 is adequate and that is the most they can put on the property. Mr. Whitfield inquired how much staff would be the maximum usage. Mr. Davis reported the first shift to the second has the highest rate of employees and as shown by the Wilkinsburg information they maxed out at 52 parking spaces at one time at 11 a.m. and 52 out of the 58 at the Wilkinsburg location which would be similar to 64 at the Monroeville location. Mr. Whitfield asserted there are not 52 employees on a shift but it is for the changing of the shifts of the people that overlap.

Mr. Gaydos questioned whether there would be any reconfiguration of the existing parking spaces and Mr. Davis pointed out a section where they would take out an island to create two parking spots to maximize the entire side area. Mr. Ries inquired whether they would repaint the lines and Mr. Davis answered affirmatively according to the ordinance. Mr. Ries inquired whether the property would meet all the other zoning requirements and Mr. Davis answered affirmatively. Mr. Gaydos stated they would also be parking added at the front towards Center Road and Mr. Davis agreed. Mr. Gaydos reported that would not affect ingress or egress from the facility and Mr. Davis stated it would be on the other side of the side of the entrance.

Mr. Ries reported they have a conditional use application pending before the Planning Commission later in the month. He questioned whether there is any way to develop the property in conformity that would not require demolition of the structure. Mr. Davis explained they would have to demolish part of the building to raise the required number of parking spaces to comply with the ordinance which would lower the number of beds and decrease the square footage of the building. Mr. Ries suggested that would decrease income and make it not feasible for Pyramid.

Mr. Gaydos inquired whether they have any plans for expansion and Mr. Davis indicated that is the maximum that can be done at the site. Mr. Ries explained they cannot expand the structure based on the parking and it could not be done without an extensive costs plus additional hearings before the zoning hearing board. Mr. Davis reported they would love to be in this area. Mr. Ries suggested Pyramid looks forward to being a good part of the community and a job provider. He pointed out the current property is vacant and this is a good use for it. He added there will be a substantial investment into the property to make sure it looks nice and it will be useful. He pointed out the code does not delineate between out-patient and in-patient and it just has the square footage requirement which for this use does not make sense in that context. He stated they addressed those facts with the testimony and suggested the structure is the hardship because it is existing and it is not the applicant that created it. He again stated the cost of demolition of the structure would be exorbitant and not something Pyramid would consider and the property cannot be used without this permitted conditional use as a substance abuse treatment facility.

Mr. Whealdon inquired whether there would be privacy fencing and security lighting. Mr. Davis reported they would have security lighting around the building along with cameras. He explained it is always well light for the staff requirement. He added it is currently screened with trees.

Mr. D'Agostino inquired whether there would be security on the premises. Mr. Davis stated it is not necessary for what they do but they will have security cameras all around the building and in the parking lots.

Mr. Gaydos questioned whether it would affect deliveries. Mr. Davis answered negatively and pointed out there is one loading dock in the back. He added their biggest delivery is the food service. Mr. Ries reported they did a traffic study for the conditional use as required.

Mr. Whitfield inquired whether this 100 percent in-patient model is what they have been using and Mr. Wolf answered affirmatively. Mr. Whitfield questioned if they would consider varying from that model and how it would affect this facility. Mr. Davis stated it is strictly an in-patient facility and it will remain that way.

There being no further discussion, Mr. D'Agostino duly made a motion to approve Application No. 25-1-A and Mrs. Wilkins seconded it. Upon a voice vote, the motion carried unanimously.

25-2-A

MARK VERHILL

The applicant is requesting a Special Exception, as per Article XII, Section 1211.C.1, Apiaries of the Monroeville Zoning Ordinance, 2779, to establish an apiary, beehive colony. The property is located at 1359 Abers Creek Road, Tax Parcels 1108-L-249 and 1109-L-231, in the R-2, Single/Multi-Family Residential Zoning District.

Mr. Mark Verhill, the applicant, came forward to explain the request. He indicated he just wants to have bee hives and try to keep them alive through the winter. He reported he has done all the training, did the Penn State course, read multiple books and registered with the state. He stated they will inspect the hives every other year and he felt the state program is well maintained. He explained it is very simple with two small boxes on eight acres.

Mr. D'Agostino inquired where the bee hives would be located on the property. Mr. Verhill reported they would be located in his garden which is 4,000 square feet and is far from the road. He stated he submitted a picture and it is at least 20 feet from the road. He explained that it is pointed directionally south and southeast. He further explained it is across the creek in the field then there is 4,000 square feet of garden.

Mr. Gaydos commended him on his beautiful house and inquired how he gets across the creek and Mr. Verhill indicated he walks through it. He reported the foot bridge was destroyed in the 2019 flood. He reported the house was gutted and he purchased it in 2019. He pointed out you can get access from the road and shuffle over the guardrail. He explained it is not really accessible and is screened in so the bees have a barrier and they will not fly out into neighboring properties. He reported they typically fly 15 meters before they are high enough then scavenge three miles away from the hive just to find pollen. Mr. Gaydos inquired whether he has plans to expand in the future and Mr. Verhill answered that he is starting with two. He explained they can easily split and the hives can be duplicated but he would prefer to not do more than four. He suggested he would move it to Murrysville if he got into more than that.

Mr. D'Agostino questioned whether he has the bees and Mr. Verhill answered negatively. He reported he would pick them up next month at the Sewickley Farmers' Market. Mr. Hutchison asserted they are local and Mr. Verhill agreed. He explained the guy he is getting the bees from is the only bee keeper that has bees on the Pittsburgh International Airport Property. He stated he is in charge of

hundreds of hives and is part of the state board for the bee keeping association. He was hopeful that he would have good bees.

Mr. Whitfield inquired whether he has worked with bees outside of his training and Mr. Verhill answered negatively. Mr. Whitfield wished him luck. Further discussion ensued.

Mr. Hutchison pointed out he is located so close to the creek and questioned whether he planned to keep the boxes elevated or at ground level. Mr. Verhill answered they will be elevated so that pests cannot get up into them and he added he has never seen it flood into his garden. He pointed out the location of the water is a resource for them to drink.

Mr. Whealdon reported he received no correspondence in favor or against the request. Mr. Verhill reported there are two bee keepers on his street out of the seven homes and everyone he talked with was in favor of it.

There being no further discussion, Mr. Hutchison duly made a motion to approve Application No. 25-2-A and Mr. D'Agostino seconded it. Upon a voice vote, the motion carried unanimously.

25-3-A

DUSTIN MATOS

The applicant is requesting a variance from Article VIII, Section 808.B, Fences and Hedges, of the Monroeville Zoning Ordinance, No. 2779, to construct a six-foot tall, solid fence in the front yard of the property that faces Monteverde Drive. The property is located at 2410 Mount Pleasant Road, Tax Parcel 640-P-158, in the R-2, Single/Multi-Family Residential Zoning District and is a corner lot with two front yards.

Mr. Dustin Matos, the applicant, came forward to explain his request. He reported his fence was blown over with a storm and he has an in-ground swimming pool. He was hoping to extend the fence into the side yard to make room for his dog and enclose one of the side doors on their screened porch. He showed the layout and pointed out the pool and he proposed to extend it further but not beyond the house.

Mr. Gaydos inquired whether Mt. Pleasant Road was the front of the house and Mr. Matos answered affirmatively. He explained the road is a dead-end then goes to another dead-end that is a pasture and horse farm.

Mr. D'Agustino inquired about the proposed fence and Mr. Matos stated it would be a six-foot vinyl privacy fence. Mr. D'Agustino inquired whether it was solid and Mr. Matos answered affirmatively.

Mr. Gaydos questioned whether there is an existing fence and Mr. Matos answered affirmatively. He pointed it out on the property. Mr. Whealdon explained from the satellite image the black line is a shadow of the fence which makes it look like a heavy marker line. Mr. Gaydos inquired about the type of the existing fence and Mr. Matos answered wood cedar. He added it is rotted and needs replaced. Mr. Gaydos asserted he proposes to replace the existing fence and Mr. Matos agreed. He added it would add an extension. Mr. D'Agustino stated he is moving the fence up and Mr. Matos answered affirmatively. Mr. Whealdon asserted it would be towards Mt. Pleasant Road but will not go beyond the front wall of the house facing Mt. Pleasant. He added it is a corner lot so they have an official hardship. Mr. Gaydos inquired whether there would be a gate and Mr. Matos answered

affirmatively. Mr. D'Agustino pointed out it would be one entrance and one exit and Mr. Matos agreed. He added it would be on the front and open up to Mt. Pleasant Road.

After further discussion, Mrs. Wilkins duly made a motion to approve Application No. 25-3-A and Mr. Hutchison seconded it. Upon a voice vote, the motion carried unanimously.

#### ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to come before the zoning hearing board, at this time, Mr. D'Agustino duly made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:14 p.m. and Mrs. Wilkins seconded it. Upon a voice vote, the motion carried unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Michael Gaydos  
Chairman

MG/sam